

A Study Guide to Jeremiah
Outlined with Sectional Summaries

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A Study Guide to the Book of Jeremiah

Historical Background

World power was about to shift from Assyria to Babylon. Only Palestine was between Babylon and Egypt. Pharaoh Necho of Egypt was determined to take aggressive steps to halt the advance. He and his armies began to march northward through Palestine. Evidently, Josiah, king of Judah, elected to oppose Necho by intercepting him on the battleground at Megiddo. He challenged his right to pass. In the ensuing battle in 609 B.C., Josiah was killed.

For a brief period after the battle of Megiddo, Judah fell to Egyptian control. Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, was chosen by the people to be the new king. But Jehoahaz was deposed by Necho and taken to Egypt as prisoner. In 605 B.C., Necho was defeated in battle at Carchemish by Babylonian forces led by Nebuchadnezzar. Thus, Babylon was considered a world power in 605 B.C.

The timeline for the historical background to the book of Jeremiah is set:

- 650 B.C. – Birth of Jeremiah
- 640 B.C. – King Josiah of Judah for 31 years
- 627 B.C. – King Josiah of Judah begins his reforms
- 626 B.C. – Jeremiah began prophesying in 626 for 40 years
- 621 B.C. – The book of the law is found and revival begins
- 612 B.C. – Nineveh is destroyed by Babylon
- 609 B.C. – Josiah is killed by archers in battle against Necho of Egypt
- 609 B.C. – Jehoahaz II/Shallum is king of Judah for 3 months & deported to Egypt
- 609 B.C. – Jehoiakim is king of Judah for 11 years and then taken to Babylon
- 606 B.C. – Judah is defeated by Babylon and enters the first phase of captivity
- 605 B.C. – The battle of Carchemish where Babylon defeats Egypt
- 597 B.C. – Jehoiachin, king of Judah for 3 months/10 days is taken to Babylon
- 597 B.C. – Zedekiah is king of Judah for 11 years
- 586 B.C. – Zedekiah is captured and Jerusalem is burned
- 585 B.C. – Jeremiah is carried away to Egypt

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is born around 650 B.C. in Anathoth, a small village north of Jerusalem. His name means, “Yahweh hurls or shoots.” His father’s name, Hilkiah, means “Yahweh is my portion.” The significance of these names lies in their indications of loyalty to the Lord, even as many within Judah and Jerusalem had fallen into apostasy and idolatry. Dark days of desperation were par for the course. Even though Yahweh was not denied doctrinally, practically speaking, He was ignored and regarded as simply one god among many. He seemed to be regarded as a *divine couch potato* to whom consultation became necessary only in cases of emergencies. Spiritual amnesia had locked the majority of people into a cage of frightful ignorance.

Only a God Who knows the outcome before the beginning, Who sees the light despite the darkness, and Who faces the present in a timeless manner since there is no past, present, or future in His sight – only such a One would call and commission Jeremiah for what appeared to be an unlikely match for a matchless situation.

To Jeremiah, therefore, the call came to alert, awaken, and arouse the people to make all sorts of changes. After all, the scene to which Jeremiah was called to minister the Word of the Lord was one of religious slumber and sickness. His call and appointment to do so actually predated his birth (1:5) but became a matter of history in the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign in Judah (626 B.C.) and continued for forty years. Jeremiah's initial reaction to God's call was one of reluctance, anchored in his inability to speak (1:6). This may refer to his sense of personal inadequacy and inexperience for the designated task. It may also indicate that he did not think the people would respect a hometown delivery boy. After all, local people typically find it difficult to hear and heed local prophets: "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his own family" (Mt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4; Jn. 4:44). God, however, quickly qualifies that he would not be speaking *his own words* but *God's word/s*. Nevertheless, it is true that when he announced in Anathoth God's word of doom for Jerusalem and Judah (7:2-7, 13-16), the homefolks and his kinsman plotted to kill him, thereby making his move to Jerusalem absolutely necessary (11:21; 12:6).

The fact that Jeremiah's coverage territory exceeded local boundaries "to the nations" (1:5 – cp. chapters 46-51: Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Elam, and Babylon) may also have triggered some hesitation and reservation for this commonly regarded sensitive, gentle, kindhearted, timid, and reserved introvert. He appeared to be more of a follower than a leader whose divine charge fitted a human, who seemed ill-fitted, to denunciate sin without apology. However, despite doubts and deficiencies, and with the Word of God burning within his bones (20:9), Jeremiah persisted in the proclamation of doom and destruction for Jerusalem and Judah and the nations, periodically laced with hope and restoration and news of a new covenant (31:31-34).

Furthermore, Jeremiah's call was reinforced through two visions (1:11-19): 1. "almond tree" was a wake tree which appeared to be dead and lifeless, even though it was awake and was getting ready for spring. Even so, God was ready to spring into judgment. 2. "boiling pot" indicated something from the north which was tilted southward and was getting ready to pour its content on the people. In other words, judgment was inevitable and unavoidably bent.

The Theology of Jeremiah

In its root meaning, *theology* refers to "thinking about God" (Humphreys). Jeremiah's thoughts on God easily revolve around six key ideas:

First, *the word of God*. To Jeremiah, this was more than just God speaking. It was His living reality and, therefore, something which burned within him (20:9; 15:16). His word was like something which could be taken in and eaten; something that would nourish him. This word of God came through self-initiated revelation on God's part. It was not the result of speculation and could not be caught or bought through negotiation. Jeremiah attacked the false prophets because they had no authentic word from God.

Second, *monotheism*. To Jeremiah, God (Yahweh/Jehovah) was not just one of many gods, He was the only God, sovereign and supreme over all people and things (nature, nations, history, righteousness, justice, love, mercy, and judgment). While such strictness may have appeared abnormal during his days, he, nevertheless, bowed the knees to no one but the God Who had called and commissioned him.

Third, *individualism*. To Jeremiah, individual responsibility supercedes that of national interests. Perhaps this comes from his own personal relationship with God. He traces sin to the heart and not to the fathers (17:9). All excuses for blaming sin on others are hereby shattered.

Fourth, *sin*. To Jeremiah, sin was conceptualized in terms of infidelity and conveyed through a deceitful human heart which was diseased, the fruit of which was seen in defiance of God's sovereignty (5:23; 7:24; 13:23; 17:9; 23:17) and mere formality of worship. For Judah, this sin carries with it the disciplined judgment of God through the Babylonian captivity.

Fifth, *repentance*. To Jeremiah, repentance meant a dramatic reversal of one's direction in life. In fact, repentance is an intermingled theme, along with the sinfulness of Judah and surrounding nations. He calls for it again and again (3:6-18, 22; 4:1-4, 14; 5:3, 6; 8:4-7; 14:7; 15:7, 19; 18:8-11; 23:14, 22; 24:7; 25:5; 31:18-22; 35:15; 36:3; 44:5, etc.). Even Jeremiah was told by God to repent so that he could be God's messenger (15:15-21).

Sixth, *new covenant*. To Jeremiah, the old covenant had been broken beyond repair. The people had wedded mere ritualistic worship with wickedness in their relationships with others. The people's trust was in the temple rituals. God Himself had been swept out the backdoor of their minds and hearts and "In Us We Trust" was their engraved motto. Therefore, in the new covenant, God will now do His own teaching. Law will be written on the heart and, thus, a new *want to* will be forthcoming. It will produce an inward moral change in all the people who embrace it. This new spiritual covenant will go on and on and will be open to all people.

A Study Guide to the Book of Jeremiah

Outlined with Sectional Summaries

A Brief Overview with Summary Statements

Superscription (1:1-3)

I Recognized Problem (1:4-20:18)

This section focuses on the reasons for the condemnation of both Judah and Israel.

II Restricted Passages (21:1-23:8)

This section focuses on Judah and her kings only.

III Related Protests (23:9-29:32)

This section focuses on conflicts with false prophets/religious leaders.

IV Restoration Promised (30:1-33:26)

This section focuses on words of consolation.

V Relevant Production (34:1-45:5)

This section focuses on Judah's response to the Word of God (34-36), contains an historical section from the siege of Jerusalem through the flight to Egypt (37-44), and Jeremiah's personal counsel to Baruch (45).

VI Regional Prophecies (46:1-51:64)

This section focuses on messages to the nine surrounding nations.

VII Remaining Points (52:1-34)

This section focuses on a summary of Judah's captivity.

An Outline of Jeremiah with Sectional Summaries

Superscription (1:1-3)

I Recognized Problem (1:4-20:18)

A. The Prophet's Call and Consecration (1:4-19)

In typical Hebrew fashion, the call and nearness of God is set forth to show that the initiative is *with* God and *from* God and no self-imposed doubts should be entertained for long. Jeremiah is assured of God's active, participatory involvement in the ministry to which he is being called and his qualification for the tasks rests in God – not himself. Despite opposition from family and friends, Jeremiah embraced the idea of being God's mouthpiece not only to Judah but also to the nations. The message of judgment is also accompanied by the hope of restoration. Through both positive and negative components, God speaks powerfully and persuasively to those with ears to hear that He was not asleep and was well aware of the sins which caused them to slumber as if He Himself was one of them. After all, God's Word is on the line. His plans will be carried out in both judgment and mercy. Jeremiah's sensitivity as to how he would be received by the people was offset by the consolation from God. He, therefore, faces his task with a mixture of brokenheartedness and courage.

1. The Divine Call (1:4-10)
2. The Divine Communication (1:11-16)
3. The Divine Charge (1:17-19)

B. The Prophet's Condemnation (2:1-6:30)

This section falls under the reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) in whose 13th year (627 B.C.) Jeremiah began prophesying. Jeremiah confronted Judah with her faithlessness, ingratitude, learning disability over Israel's failures, self-perpetrated blindness to her sinful condition, and shameless harlotry. Instead of following God, Judah follows in the footprints of Israel, making Judah's faithlessness worse than that of Israel. Nevertheless, God extends through Jeremiah's painful and passionate heart, the message of hope and renewal based on the return of both Israel and Judah to the Lord as the only way to avert coming judgment. Jeremiah's message to Judah and Israel is decorated with itemized sinfulness, warnings, and shock at their stubbornness. The reasons for judgment are boldly proclaimed, as well as the means by which punishment will transpire.

1. The Disastrous Conduct (2:1-37)
2. The Demanded Condition (3:1-4:4)
3. The Declared Certainty (4:5-6:30)

C. The Prophet's Concern (7:1-10:25)

Despite being drenched in sinful practices, Judah's adherence to her religious routines at the temple were still maintained. So, at the temple gate, Jeremiah's message is not only one of appeal and encouragement to return wholeheartedly to God but also one of confronting them with their delusions about the safety of the temple and their religious superstitions associated with being in its precincts. Jeremiah's message was met with anger and bitterness. God, therefore, forbids Jeremiah to intercede for them. Instead, he explodes with sarcasm over their meaningless religious ceremonies which are devoid of appropriate behavioral responses to God and others. Deadly devastation was the only follow-up which awaited these recalcitrant people. Even though Judah had been deceived by false prophets, Jeremiah's grief was intermingled with the judgments he declared because of their disobedience. He prayerfully acknowledges the frailty of human life, the need for mercy, and the just destruction of those who refuse to recognize God.

1. The Destined Consequences (7:1-8:3)
2. The Despicable Character (8:4-10:22)
3. The Desired Correction (10:23-25)

D. The Prophet and the Covenant (11:1-23)

Jeremiah is instructed by God to remind the people that the covenant was sealed by God's decision to act redemptively in their behalf. Nevertheless, the people of Judah and Jerusalem have consistently conspired against God and chose to follow their own evil desires. By worshiping self-made idols, they have violated the covenant and will suffer calamitous consequences. As the messengers of God frequently find out, such devastating news caused the people to also conspire against God's messenger with the intent to kill him. Jeremiah was naively shocked to learn about this intention from God Himself. He pleads with God to intervene in his behalf. God's assures him of *protection* for him and *punishment* for the people.

1. The Deliberate Choice (11:1-8)
2. The Decreed Calamity (11:9-17)
3. The Discovered Conspiracy (11:18-23)

E. The Prophet's Complaint (12:1-4)

The weeping prophet was so shaken by the wickedness of the people that he confessed his confusion to God. Like Job, it was a confusion dressed in disgust. It seemed that God was letting the people get away with their evil ways. Where was His heretofore justice? The people lived as if God

would not even see their ways of wickedness.

1. The Disgusting Confusion (12:1)
2. The Disclosed Concern (12:2-4a)
3. The Deceptive Confidence (12:4b)

F. The Painful Confession (12:5-17)

God replies that Jeremiah has not seen anything yet. Just as Jeremiah had been betrayed by his own family, and must forsake them, so God had been betrayed by His people and must forsake them. Jeremiah's trust should, therefore, be in God. After all, it was only going to get worse. Several figures of speech are used to depict the forthcoming distasteful consequences upon the rebellious people. Furthermore, consider the fact that God's compassion extends to all nations. Despite what the enemy nations have done to God's people, they too will be welcomed as His people if they turn to God and learn His ways.

1. The Direct Challenge (12:5-6)
2. The Distasteful Consequences (12:7-13)
3. The Descriptive Consideration (12:14-17)

G. The Parabolic Confrontations (13:1-14)

By means of two parables, the truth that any object is valuable only if it is properly used is strikingly depicted. As a linen belt must be worn around one's waist, God had so bound Himself to His people. Judah's failure to follow Him rendered them as useless as a belt which had been torn apart. Furthermore, because the people are so consumed with self-sufficiency, they will become like fermented particles in a wine jar. As the process of fermentation results in drunken confusion to those who drink those particles, such will be the case with the inhabitants of Judah as they collide against each other in confusion.

1. The Deteriorated Cloth (13:1-11)
2. The Destructive Collision (13:12-14)

H. The Promised Captivity (13:15-27)

The proverb that "pride goes before a fall," surely fits Judah without exception. Unless Judah responds by acknowledging the glory or sovereignty of God, all sorts of stumbling in darkness and ultimate exile into Babylon will follow for all the people of Judah, including the ruling family (Jehoiachin: 598-597 B.C.). The devastating armies from the north (Babylon) will succeed because of the greatness of their iniquity; an iniquity so deep in moral depravity and perversion that it cannot be eradicated. God's chastisement is described in terms of chaff being

scattered by the winds, spiritual amnesia, misplaced trust, spiritual adultery and lustfulness, as well as idolatry.

1. The Deficiency Confronted (13:15-17)
2. The Degradation Crystallized (13:18-19)
3. The Dishonorable Chastisement (13:20-27)

I. The Peculiar Composition (14:1-15:9)

Because of Judah's sin, the distressed caused by God's judgment of holding back the rain affected not only business regulations but also all the people (regardless of their socioeconomic status), as well as the land itself and the animals. The subsequent prayers of the people were actually superficial pretense and based in self-pity rather than genuine sorrow for their sin. In reality, they were blaming God for their suffering. Their conception of God was one of entitlement to rescue them, regardless of their behaviors. God, however, flips the equation with His own countercharge: *they* were the ones who were fickle and faithless. Therefore, Jeremiah was forbidden by God to intercede for them. Instead of listening to and heeding the appeals from true prophets, they had embraced the lies of false prophets. The subsequent carnage was well-deserved. Nevertheless, the plight of the people precipitated grief from both God and Jeremiah. Jeremiah declares that their only hope is in God Himself. However, God insists that even repeated intercessions would be to no avail. The doom and devastation of Judah are inevitable.

1. The Distressful Circumstances (14:1-6)
2. The Deceitful Claims (14:7-9)
3. The Disturbing Countercharge (14:10-12)
4. The Deluded Conceptions (14:13-14)
5. The Deserved Carnage (14:15-16)
6. The Designated Command (14:17-18)
7. The Desperate Contention (14:19-22)
8. The Detailed Consignment (15:1-9)

J. The Prophet's Crisis (15:10-16:21)

Much of this section alternates between Jeremiah's complaints about the mental anguish, uncertainties, hopelessness, bitterness, grief, and confusions he is going through, and the Lord's responses of encouragement, with a slight rebuke for his lack of faith, in light of his despondency. However, the personal comforts of home and family are prohibited, due to the fact that all children born in this place would die from terrible diseases. So, the prohibition is really an act of mercy. Jeremiah is also forbidden to attend the funerals of those who die.

All means of comfort and consolation in their behalf are to be avoided. All things which were pleasurable are, likewise, off base. When the people inquire about the severity of these prohibitions, they are to be informed that it is because of the severity of their sins, as well as that of their ancestors. Although *hope* for the future softens, somewhat, the darkness of the judgments, it is all designed to demonstrate that God alone is worthy of worship and obedience.

1. The Deploring Cry (15:10-14)
2. The Daring Communion (15:15-18)
3. The Dramatic Conversion (15:19-21)
4. The Denied Contacts (16:1-9)
5. The Diasporic Confounding (16:10-13)
6. The Disciplined Company (16:14-15)
7. The Double Crumble (16:16-18)
8. The Delightful Contention (16:19-21)

K. The Prophetic Climax (17:1-27)

By means of two illustrations, God drives home the fact that Judah's sin is so deeply and indelibly engrained that it has catastrophically infected their very children and is the dominating drive in their lives as well. Punishment will consist of being plundered by the enemies, loss of the inheritance, and captivity. The contrast between *what is* and *what could have been* is vividly portrayed. To understand the corrupt nature of the human heart exceeds man's ability to adequately grasp. Those who seek to compensate for their corruption with dishonestly obtained possessions may be compared to a bird which hatches eggs she has not laid. Both will fly away or disappear when needed the most. Therefore, the only way to be meaningfully connected to life is to be connected to the God Who makes life possible. However, the overwhelmingly difficult circumstances in which Jeremiah finds himself prompts his distinct craving of protection for himself and destruction upon his enemies – and God's. Since the people had secularized the Sabbath, thereby revealing their moral decay, Jeremiah is instructed to stress its sacredness by joyfully honoring God. Failure to do so will result in utter destruction of their ill-gotten gain.

1. The Determined Catastrophe (17:1-4)
2. The Dual Contrast (17:5-8)
3. The Deadly Corruption (17:9-10)
4. The Discovered Comparison (17:11)
5. The Distinguishing Connection (17:12-13)
6. The Distinctive Craving (17:14-18)
7. The Dutiful Consideration (17:19-27)

L. The Potter's Characterization (18:1-19:13)

The object lesson of the potter and the clay is that God's purpose of shaping the nation of Israel as a vehicle for His use has moral implications and has been spoiled by their sin. Therefore, a reshaping, by brokenness and refinement, must inevitably take place. The choice of resentment and refusal to repent on the part of the people leaves God with no other choice than the course of judgment and punishment. As a monument to their stupidity, worthless idols, stumbling, muddy pathways, desolation, and scattering before their enemies in utter confusion will dot the landscape. The religious leaders contrive to spread rumors about him, ignoring his denunciations and predictions, even to the point of murderous plots against him. Jeremiah's concession and vindictive prayer sprang from his realization of lost hope for the nation. The certainties of judgment are seen in vivid expressions: ringing ears to depict its magnitude; burning incense to foreign gods and pagan shrines to depict its idolatry; the blood of innocent children to depict its inconceivable inhumanity; dead bodies as food for wild animals; eating the flesh of sons and daughters to depict insatiable hunger; and such total destruction that people who subsequently pass by will gasp in astonishment.

1. The Decided Correlation (18:1-12)
2. The Defective Course (18:13-17)
3. The Diverse Contrivance (18:18)
4. The Delicate Concession (18:19-23)
5. The Detailed Certainties (19:1-13)

M. The Prophetic Consciousness (19:14-20:18)

Because of his repeated message of *doom*, Jeremiah was in conflict with the message of the clergy/priest, Pashhur, whose message of *peace* was preferred by the people. He retaliated against Jeremiah by arresting, whipping, and putting him in stocks for the night. On the following day, Jeremiah informs him of his name change, indicating the *terrors* which will follow him to his grave. He and all his friends are destined for slaughter, captivity, plundering, and death. As Jeremiah contemplated his mission of bearing the message of doom and gloom, he himself was overwhelmed with terrors. Yet he could not cancel the dynamic compulsion to proclaim the word and will of God. However, as his thoughts shifted from himself to the greatness of Almighty God Who called him, he, once again, appeals to God that he might see God's vengeance against them. The way to conquer his doubts and difficulties comes only from God. Nevertheless, the ebb and flow of his own humanity with feelings of being cursed since birth does not so easily disappear. Like Job and Jesus, he too experienced an intermingling of faith and frustration. Without the revealed fluctuations Jeremiah felt, it might be easy to conclude that one victory is enough for all time, rather than many struggles and victories sprinkled throughout one's journey of following God.

1. The Denounced Clergy (19:14-20:6)
2. The Dynamic Compulsion (20:7-10)
3. The Difficulty Conquered (20:11-13)
4. The Despairing Curse (20:14-18)

II Restricted Passages (21:1-23:8)

N. The Prophetic Complex (21:1-23:8)

Despite the consultations with Jeremiah by a delegation from King Zedekiah, Jeremiah courageously declares that the end of the nation is irrevocably determined and there will be no deliverance from Babylonian captivity. However, to surrender to them will mean *life* and to resist them will mean *death*. Unless the royal family of Judah rules with equity and justice, they too will be consumed with dismal calamities because of their sinful choices. After all, people tend to follow their leaders. Jeremiah is then instructed by God to post the citation of desolation unless ethical and fair-minded practices among all the people are implemented by the king of Judah. The Lord's high and lofty love for the people will not prevent His utter destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Violation of the covenant by worshiping other gods will not be tolerated and will bear witness against them to many nations. Following the death of King Josiah in 609 B.C., Jeremiah prohibits a dirgeful chant over Josiah and redirects such mourning to his son, Jehoahaz, who succeeded him (for 3 months) and was taken away as a captive. Jeremiah then issues denunciations against the subsequent kings: Jehoiakim (Eliakim) who reigned for 11 years and was deported to Babylon; Jehoiachin (Jeconiah and Coniah) who reigned for 3 months and 10 days and was deported to Babylon. Although the noted declensions were unavoidable, and the disastrous judgment of God on the evil ruler-kings was but a fulfillment of God's promises, the promise of God for a new King Who shows fresh life and rules with wisdom and justice will also be fulfilled for the remnant.

1. The Delegation Consults (21:1-2)
2. The Dogmatic Courage (21:3-10)
3. The Dynastic Calling (21:11-12)
4. The Dismal Cataclysm (21:13-14)
5. The Desolation Citation (22:1-9)
6. The Dirgeful Chant (22:10-12)
7. The Depreciated Culprit (22:13-19)
8. The Deplorable Capture (22:20-23)
9. The Discarded Castaway (22:24-30)
10. The Diplomatic Close (23:1-8)

III Related Protests (23:9-29:32)

O. The Prophet's Contention (23:9-40)

The religious leaders of the nation caused much grief and disheartenment to Jeremiah. The claims he makes against them indicated immorality to the hilt. The holiness of God stood in stark contrast to their unholy character and conduct. Both priests and prophets were drenched in despicable activities. In comparison to the prophets of Samaria, the ones in Jerusalem were even worse. In comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah, they were equally wicked. Thus, sorrow and calamity will follow. They are justly criticized by God through the true prophet Jeremiah. These false prophets only say what the people want to hear. They offer futile hopes and promises which nullify God's words. They do not know God and do not speak for Him. They are prophets of deceit, deception, and delusions. Their imaginations run wild. They only get their messages from one another and thereby merit the resistance of God. So, the false prophets and their prophecies should be censured. As significant vehicles of dialogue and communication, the very *words or terms* used to differentiate the true prophets from the false prophets should be changed. No stone should be left unturned.

1. The Disheartening Claims (23:9-12)
2. The Distinct Comparison (23:13-15)
3. The Defamatory Criticism (23:16-32)
4. The Darkened Censure (23:33-40)

P. The Prophet's Contemplation (24:1-10)

Having been exiled to Babylon, Jeremiah was instructed by God to teach a lesson with commonplace objects: *figs*. The good figs represented the exiles in Babylon who would be protected by God and who would eventually return to God. They will learn that God is not restricted to religious institutions but may be encountered anywhere. The bad figs represented the people still living in Jerusalem, especially King Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.; also known as Mattaniah), his rotten officials, and all the people who left in Jerusalem and Egypt. They will be cursed, disgraced, and ultimately vanished through warfare, disease, and famine – despite all their religious trappings.

1. The Didactic Commonplace (24:1-3)
2. The Doctrine Conveyed (24:4-10)

Q. The Prophet's Cast (25:1-38)

Jeremiah's review of the past indicated that chronic disobedience was the name of the game for all the people of Judah. They had not even tried to hear with the intent to obey. Expulsion from the land was contingent upon obedience,

which did not happen. They continued in disobedience. Their future would be a repetition of their past which would eventually converge in destruction. Although the evil nation of Babylon would be used instrumentally by God for the destruction, His punishment of Babylon would be withheld until the captivity and punishment of His people was over. In fact, all the nations of the earth would be held accountable to God and suffer from the dreadful cup of His anger in terrible wars and disasters beyond relief. The multi-flavored depictions of the various disasters are graphic enough.

1. The Disobedience Continued (25:1-7)
2. The Destruction Converges (25:8-14)
3. The Dreadful Cup (25:15-38)

R. The Prophet's Clash (26:1-29:32)

To say that "one man and God constitute a majority" is not without objective truth in the case of Jeremiah. The people of Judah and the religious leadership absolutely resented his messages of doom and gloom. Nevertheless, Jeremiah stands for God and with God as he hurls another warning of *detestable curse* in the temple court, instead of *peace and security* as the false prophets and priests had been announcing. The priests, prophets, and all the people responded in commotion by mobbing him, accusing him of being a traitor, and threatening to kill him. Jeremiah's defense was couched in confident reliance upon God, integrity, and warning. The officials agreed and the decisive citation for Jeremiah was one of acquittal. Unfortunately, Uriah had previously prophesied against the city and nation and met with far different results. So, Jeremiah's acquittal was all in accord with the plan and power of God. Through a dramatic object lesson of a yoke fastened around the neck of Jeremiah, God counsels the surrounding nations not to rebel but submit to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, all the while ignoring the false prophets. Even in such submission, the people will be allowed to stay in their own country. God's counsel to King Zedekiah of Judah, the priests and the people, was also one of submission in order to live. Even the valuable ceremonial articles would eventually be returned once the exile is over. As the defiant creature that he was, the false prophet Hananiah, who epitomized all the false prophets, spoke more false prophecies. Jeremiah initially thought that what he said would be true. God, however, told him that such would not be the case and to confront him with words of death. Jeremiah then sent two correspondences: one to the exiles about their general welfare for a long stay in Babylon, as well as a warning against the false prophets; a second to the false prophet, Shemaiah the Nehelemite, rebuking him for deceiving the people with lies. Neither he nor his family would live to see the good things God would do for His people.

1. The Detestable Curse (26:1-6)

2. The Derivative Commotion (26:7-11)
3. The Defensive Counter (26:12-15)
4. The Decisive Citation (26:16-24)
5. The Discharged Counsel (27:1-22)
6. The Defiant Creature (28:1-17)
7. The Documentary Correspondence (29:1-32)

IV Restoration Promised (30:1-33:26)

S. The Prophetic Consolation (30:1-33:26)

A profoundly hopeful section, the subject matter, the atmosphere, and the tenor abounds with unique optimism. The dismay brought about by their captivity is cancelled with *figurative promises* of deliverance and much compassion: restored fortunes, terminated times of trouble, breaking the yoke of foreign masters, healing previously inflicted wounds, the attacking of enemies, rebuilding and reconstruction, joyful songs of thanksgiving, prosperous children, rest for the people, leaning on the everlasting arms of love, fruitful vineyards, joyful ingredients enumerated, sadness replaced with comfort and a joyful homecoming, individual responsibility, a new covenant of inward motivation and morality, the forgiveness of wickedness and sins, a guarantee of continued existence, and a rebuilt Jerusalem. The restoration is then portrayed in terms of a deed of purchase. The realization of such intervention and relief spawns a deliberative communion with God about His love, power, promises, and the prophet's own perplexed state of mind. God reminds Jeremiah that He is the Lord of history and circumstance and that His ability to bring about cleansing or redemption through tragedy is a settled destination. The desperate conditions of a damaged and ravaged city will be offset by divine initiative and invitation, spiritual healing, material prosperity, and God's unique administration of mercy to many will be the rule of thumb.

1. The Dismay Cancelled (30:1-17)
2. The Depicted Compassion (30:18-31:40)
3. The Deeded Customer (32:1-15)
4. The Deliberative Communion (32:16-25)
5. The Destined Cleansing (32:26-33:26)

V Relevant Production (34:1-45:5)

T. The Prophet's Craftsmanship (34:1-36:32)

Since Jeremiah was convinced that God had decreed the captivity, his counsel to King Zedekiah was to submit to King Nebuchadnezzar. However, Jeremiah assures him that he would not die by the sword but in peace

in an honorable fashion, even though the cities of Jerusalem, Lachish, and Azekah would be destroyed. Jeremiah was also instructed by God to proclaim freedom for the slaves, a policy which was in conjunction with the law of Moses, but which had apparently been neglected for selfish reasons. The abject moral poverty of the people knew no boundaries. Since a contract required the cutting of a calf in half to be ratified, their disavowing of the contract would result in the people being killed or cut in half. The fickleness of the people (officials, priests, common people) was seen in the absence of a real change of heart and behavior. Superficiality reigned. In order to further illustrate and drive home God's truth, Jeremiah provides a striking contrast between the *obedience* of the Recabites, a nomadic desert tribe who supported the Israelites during the Exodus (1 Chronicles 2:55; Judges 1:16), and the *dis-obedience* of Judah. Nevertheless, the shocking contrast between the Recabites who were devoted to a dead ancestor and the people of Jerusalem and Judah who were so apathetic to a living God fell appallingly on deaf ears and horrible consequences followed. The Recabites, on the other hand, were rewarded with descendants to this very day. Chapter 36 provides unique insights into how Jeremiah's prophecies were compiled and arranged into its present composition. Specifics involved include a roll book, pen, ink, scribal selection, the actual dictation, the burning of the scroll, as well as its being rewritten.

1. The Devout Counselor (34:1-7)
2. The Disavowed Contract (34:8-22)
3. The Discriminate Contrast (35:1-19)
4. The Dictated Copies (36:1-32)

U. The Prophetic Chronology (37:1-44:30)

Although the Babylonians or Chaldeans had temporarily withdrawn from the siege of Jerusalem to face the Egyptians from the south, Zedekiah sent two men to Jeremiah, asking him to pray for the people. Jeremiah responded that the dreaded Chaldeans would return to destroy the city. Jeremiah had temporarily left to take care of some family property and was falsely accused of desertion. Despite his efforts to clarify the matter, he was delivered over to the government officials as a captive. After spending many days in prison, he was eventually granted a disguised conference with Zedekiah who recognized his refusal to compromise his convictions, his integrity, and truthfulness, and granted Jeremiah's request for kinder treatment than he had received in the prison. He was placed in the court of the guard with daily bread. Here he continued to speak the truths of God. However, the princes quickly grew tired of his talk and appealed to Zedekiah for his death. He was cast into a dreary cistern where death by starvation or suffocation was anticipated. Through the intervention of Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian eunuch, a decisive concession was made for his rescue from the cistern and return to the court of the guard.

Zedekiah found himself in a desperate situation and is looking for any ray of hope which Jeremiah might offer. After being assured of not being put to death, Jeremiah responds with gentleness to the king by not revealing the whole truth to the princes about the true nature of their colloquy or conversation. Jeremiah was returned to the court of the guard and placed under the care of Gedaliah until the fall of Jerusalem whose destruction is depicted in graphic sadness. The citizens are deported. Some degree of confusion exists about the exact meaning of 39:11-40:6. No matter how the details are determined, Jeremiah gained his freedom. Zedekiah's *faithlessness* resulted in his imprisonment until his death. Ebed-melech *faithfulness* was honored by gaining life. As an example of devotion to God and utmost responsibility, Jeremiah chose to stay with Gedaliah, who was now the governor of Judah. In his final days, Jeremiah was apparently in Mizpah recovering from his imprisonment. He had hoped for peace without having to proclaim additional messages of judgment. But such was not to be the case. Sorrow, disorder, and commotion followed him to the end of his life. Gedaliah was killed by Ishmael, perhaps under the direction of Baalis, the king of the Ammonites. What happened to Ishmael is not known. However, fearing reprisals from the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, the people camped near Bethlehem and sought Jeremiah's advice about what to do. Despite his prayerful advice that God wanted them to remain where they were, Jeremiah was accused of lying and the people disobeyed and went to Egypt. Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar would come to Egypt with devastation and destruction. In a symbolic act, Jeremiah destroyed their belief that they could worship other gods along with the covenant God. Despite the negative response of the people, Jeremiah remained his prophetic self: the people, at large, have still misunderstood the character of God and committed total apostasy and its forthcoming judgment. The disdainful will be consumed. Only a remnant understood and escaped.

1. The Dreaded Chaldeans (37:1-10)
2. The Delivered Captive (37:11-15)
3. The Disguised Conference (37:16-21)
4. The Dauntless Conversations (38:1-3)
5. The Dreary Cistern (38:4-6)
6. The Decisive Concession (38:7-13)
7. The Desperate Colloquy (38:14-28)
8. The Destroyed City (39:1-8)
9. The Deported Citizens (39:9-10)
10. The Debatable Confusion (39:11-40:6)
11. The Disappointing Crash (40:7-41:18)
12. The Disobedient Crowd (42:1-43:7)
13. The Disdainful Consumed (43:8-44:30)

V. The Prophet's Companion (45:1-5)

Baruch is mentioned 23 times in the book of Jeremiah. He was Jeremiah's companion as a secretary or amanuensis who witnessed and preserved the sealed deed of Jeremiah's land purchase of a field in Anathoth (32:13-16). He also read all the Lord's messages to Jeremiah against Israel, Judah, and all other nations (36:4, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 26, 27, 32). In 43:3,6, he was accused of convincing Jeremiah to lie about God's forbidding the people to go to Egypt. Here, Baruch writes down dictations from Jeremiah about what God says. Baruch was overwhelmed with sorrow for reasons not specified. God reminds him that his sorrow was surpassed by God's own sorrow. Nevertheless, God comforts him with assurance of life. Jeremiah challenges Baruch to be selflessly loyal to God and not discouraged over the destruction of the people.

1. The Dictated Codex (45:1)
2. The Divine Context (45:2)
3. The Despondent Cry (45:3)
4. The Daring Challenge (45:4-5)

VI Regional Prophecies (46:1-51:64)

W. The Prophecies Concerning (46:1-51:64):

Since God was the Lord of all nations, and as was typical of prophetic literature, Jeremiah does what the other major prophets did: set forth prophecies against foreign nations (cp. Isaiah 13-23; Ezekiel 25-32). Through the use of poetic imagery, the primary purpose of these prophecies was to depict, for the benefit of the remnant, the victorious achievement of God's workings in history, even when it meant defeat for those nations which rebelled against God and His people. In what may appear paradoxical to man, God uses enemy forces to achieve his will in historical times and settings. The basis themes which are registered through these regional prophecies are: the negative results of a misplaced faith and undisciplined lifestyles; pride leads to downfall and judgments which are thorough; helpless resistance to God's destructive forces; self-sufficiency and pursuing secular treasures lead to disappointing results; human skills are no match for confrontation with God's determination to consume those who oppose His will; even the hated Babylonians, whose oppression was used by God for the judgment of His people, would not escape God's punishment; nations which operate on the basis of fear and fraudulent practices will reap what they sow; repentance may eventually become an impossibility, especially when idolatry is chronically cherished, and when the light God gives is persistently rejected so that darkness replaces hope with hopelessness. Walk in the light that is given, and more light will be forthcoming.

1. Egypt (46:1-28)

2. Philistia (47:1-7)
3. Moab (48:1-47)
4. Ammon (49:1-6)
5. Edom (49:7-22)
6. Damascus (49:23-27)
7. Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33)
8. Elam (49:34-39)
9. Babylon (50:1-51:64)

VII Remaining Points (52:1-34)

X. The Prophetic Conclusion (52:1-34)

From a retrospective angle, this chapter adapts material from 2 Kings 24:18-25:30 as it reviews the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, the deaths of select people who supported the revolt, the three deportations of the citizens, and the deliverance and preferential treatment of King Jehoiachin. Thus, the messages of Jeremiah are here underlined to have been faithfully proclaimed and fulfilled.

1. The Destroyed City (52:1-16)
2. The Despoiled Cathedral (52:17-23)
3. The Dispatched Crowd (52:24-27)
4. The Deported Citizens (52:28-30)
5. The Delivered Chief (52:31-34)

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